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27 February 1951

SUBJECT: BERZINS, Alfred (Alfreds)

The files of this office reflect the following information on the Subject:

1. The Latvian "Ko's Ko" ( "Ko Vīnu Kāpītu" ), published in Riga, Latvia, 1 November 1939, gives the following biographic data:

"BERZINS, Alfreds—minister of Public (Internal) affairs, born 21 October 1899 in Jēri district. Father: Jacob—farmer, mother: Karline. Wife - alive now—schaberte. Attended the Pujiņa Trade School, secondary school at Valga, finished secondary school for adults in Riga and also the Latvian military school. During Latvia's liberation struggle participated in a partisan group in Northern Latvia, later was a member of the Valmiera regiment in engagements against General Bermon and his bands. Former member of the Diet (Peasant Union). Wrote for the newspaper "Brīva Latvja" and others, founded and managed several papers in Central Latvia (Vidzeme). Active in young peoples' organizations, and from 1926 also in the Home Guard ("Aizsargi") organization, initially as instructor, later as the head of the Publicity and membership section and thereafter as head of the Public Information section. Now (i.e.m. 1939) he is the highest responsible leader of the organization. Initiated and developed close contact between the Latvian Home Guard and similar Estonian, Lithuanian, Finnish and Polish organizations. During the events of 15 May 1934 a. Berzins was a trusted supporter of President Kārlis Ulmanis and the War Minister, General Janis Balodis. From 1934 to 1937 he was a Vice-minister of the Interior in the first National Government of a Rejuvenated Latvia, but from 1 April 1937 he became the Minister of Public Affairs. As Minister of Public Affairs, A. Berzins played a leading part in directing the propaganda work connected with the popularization of the aims and aspirations of the New Latvia. In the interest of the idea of a United Latvia he managed the affairs of the press and radio;

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under his management were also the activities of reorganized public association. Berzins was also director of state (sponsored) sports activity. One further prominent function of Berzins was to develop tourist travel throughout the country. Through the new Latvian trade movement, A. Berzins was instrumental in advancing to realization President A. Ulmanis' business program of social policies. During absences from office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs Berzins has frequently fulfilled his functions and has also acted as the Latvian representative at international labor conferences in Geneva. Has received Latvian and foreign decorations."

2. Information regarding subject from a miscellany of other sources is as follows:

a. In the Latvian emigre community BERZINS is considered an authoritarian-nationalist due to his intimate association with the authoritarian Ulmanis regime brought into being in Latvia in 1934. As of 10 December 1950 he was residing in Chatham, N.J. He is very active in Latvian emigre circles, primarily as a "lone wolf", since he apparently is not directly associated as a member with any of the main Latvian emigre organizations, such as the Latvian National Council and Latvian Central Council, which represent themselves as being based on democratic principles. While a DP, as well as now in the U.S., Berzins has been and continues to be active on behalf of the "ABN" - commonly known as the "Anti-Communist Bloc of Nations", which is a Ukrainian dominated loose federation type of an organization of emigres of several Soviet ruled nationalities interested in combatting Communism. He is reported as being in close touch with Stefan BORKOWSKI and Jaroslav STETSKO who are the leaders of the Ukrainian element of the ABN. Berzins currently appears to be making direct and indirect approaches (through personal supporters) to the NCN, as well as to VOA and other unofficial and official U.S. military and political agencies, attempting to interest them in giving support to ABN. He is variously described as the "Chairmen of ABN", "Chairman of the Political Council of the ABN" and "Chairman of the ABN for the U.S.;" the latter being probably the most correct designation for Berzins' present role in that organization.

b. During the first Soviet occupation of Latvia (1940-1941) Berzins remained in his homeland at least for a time and described his experiences there in a booklet entitled I Saw Viestinieky Polsharize Latvia, which was published in the U.S. in 1948 by the Latvian Legation in Washington, D.C. Several sources report that when Germans occupied Latvia Berzins was arrested by the Gestapo (though it is not clear whether in Latvia or elsewhere) for alleged anti-German activity and was kept in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp for 33 months. The sources merely state that Berzins regained his freedom at the end of 1944, and eventually became a resident of DP camps, among them a camp in Bremen, Germany.

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3. Two single sources state the following regarding the Subject, without further elaboration:

a. "Formerly a Minister in the Ulmanis Cabinet in Latvia, who was in touch with the Japanese in Helsinki in 1940, through whom he obtained a Manchurian passport. (Bergins is an) adventurer and untrustworthy."

b. "Gestapo agent. Betrayed to Gestapo the Director of the firm 'Gatland films' and caused two members of the firm to be placed in a concentration camp." (1945 information).

4. Upon arrival in the U.S. under the IP Act Bergans' address was to have been c/o A. Skujins, 8 Wall Place, Newark 6, N.J. He is presently unemployed. It is reported that due to his age and the physical hardships that he endured during his incarceration in the concentration camp he cannot perform physical work.

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